



INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST CANCER 17th INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONGRESS Rio de Janeiro, Brazil August 23–28, 1998

PRESENTATION OF THE THIRD MUCIO ATHAYDE CANCER PRIZE

On Monday 24th of August, the International Union Against Cancer presented the Third Mucio Athayde Cancer Prize to Dr. Praful B. Desai from India, a surgeon and clinical scientist, in recognition of his many significant contributions to the control and treatment of cancer in India and internationally. The US\$150,000 prize is intended to allow the laureate to continue his leadership in fighting cancer. The Mucio Athayde Cancer Prize is awarded by the UICC to a scientist who has made a major discovery or significant contribution with global impact to the fight against cancer.

The prize-giving ceremony was held at the Vila Riso, at a special evening event of the UICC Roll of Honor of Distinguished Oncologists. The presentation was made by the donor of the prize, Mr. Mucio Athayde, founder of the Instituto Mucio Athayde de Combate ao Cancer.

Dr. Desai's leadership in oncology evolved from a dynamic and innovative approach to the cancer programme at the Tata Memorial Centre, Hospital and Cancer Research Institute in Mumbai, India. In his functions as Director, Chief Surgeon, Educator and Researcher (1966–1995), he first created a hospital-based cancer registry, computerized medical information systems, a De-

partment of Preventive Oncology and Cancer Education, a Department of Professional Education, and a Rehabilitation Clinic for children cured of cancer. Using the advanced knowledge and therapeutic techniques of a comprehensive cancer centre, Dr. Desai was then instrumental in expanding preventive oncology and educational activities to rural communities in India through outreach programmes. In 1983, he initiated a programme of community centres in rural Barsi for treatment as well as public and professional education, an effort which was recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and which became a national model for India. The use of regional centres and mobile vans have resulted in earlier and improved diagnosis and treatment of cancer in rural areas, and higher rates of survival have been documented for cancer of the cervix and of the head and neck. Dr. Desai's collaborative efforts have made information about such outreach programmes widely available internationally through the UICC.

On the international scene, Dr. Desai has long served health-related organizations, including the WHO and, in particular, the UICC, whose objectives he has helped to meet since 1986 in many capacities, including as member of its Council and Executive Committee, as Programme and Project Chairman, and as Chairman of the 1994 UICC International Cancer Congress held in New Delhi.